

## THE PRESS

### MAGAZINES

#### Manning the Ramparts —Or Is It the Barricades?

"I wouldn't pay much attention to those stories about *Ramparts'* troubles—you've heard those kind of rumors all the time about *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*," *Ramparts* Editor Warren Hinckle III quipped at a meeting of magazine editors in Manhattan last week. Later the 30-year-old editor, who manages to look at once rakish and boyish, appeared in a red shirt, Hush Puppies and a tattered eye patch,\* to tell reporters in *Ramparts'* offices in

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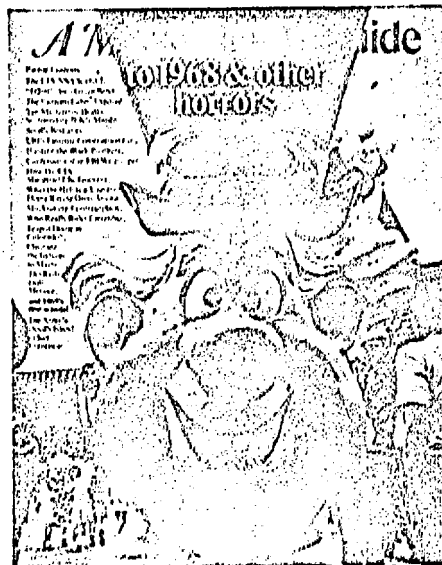
HINCKLE

No phones, no booze, no money.

the Fisherman's Wharf area of San Francisco: "The magazine is bankrupt; the phones are out; there's no booze in the closet; we're dead."

Indeed, the *Ramparts* board of directors decided last week to go into bankruptcy, and Hinckle resigned as editor and president of the corporation. But whether the sensation-seeking journal of New Left opinion actually was dead was still uncertain. Hinckle said the situation was so hopeless that he would start a new publication, mischievously called "Barricades," that would be "an investigative, swinging magazine just like the old *Ramparts*"—but free of debt. Yet Frederick Mitchell, a 35-year-old former history professor who has reportedly put \$500,000 of his inherited funds into *Ramparts* since becoming publisher two years ago, vowed that "even if I have to put out a four-page mimeograph of *Ramparts*, I'll do that."

As often before in its frenetic past, the *Ramparts* staff was locked in debate over its future. Typically, it was letting mini-skirted secretaries and bearded writers have as much say as its directors. The argument was not over policy but money; *Ramparts* needs at least \$300,000 to clear its debts. No one believed that both *Ramparts* and a competitor could survive. The question was whether the staff should follow Mitchell's plan to reorganize while in bankruptcy and seek new funding, or buy Hinckle's idea of starting all over under a new name. Said Mitchell of the uncertainty surrounding the magazine: "The whole staff could



LATEST ISSUE OF "RAMPARTS"

leave, or we could elect the copyboy treasurer and carry on. It could go a lot of different directions."

*Ramparts* had been all but bankrupt from the moment it was converted in 1962 from a mediocre Catholic literary quarterly into a rampaging crusader for leftist causes. It employed highly emotional writing and skilled promotion techniques to magnify its occasional and not really fresh revelations—including covert CIA funding of the National Student Association and military-financed secret research at universities. Circulation rose to a high of about 225,000. It has been losing some \$20,000 an issue, partly because of its flashy, full-color format (says Hinckle: "I hate butcher paper"). A contributing reason was the fact that some of the staff grew fond of spending too freely.

At the Democratic convention, recalls Managing Editor Robert Scheer, "there we were, all staying at the Ambassador Hotel in Chicago, while the movement kids were getting their skulls cracked."

Even the flamboyant Hinckle, who searched for financial angels in night clubs, became so enamored of the swinging life that he talked to *Playboy* about a job—and was turned down.

Joyfully Biased. Hinckle readily concedes that *Ramparts* stories are "totally and absolutely and joyfully biased. We went in to hang the CIA. We went in to hang the Saigon government, to kill the war in Vietnam. That's what political journalism is all about." But he complains, as does Scheer, that the magazine has paid dearly for its opinionated independence. Stories on Black Power, Barry Goldwater and the CIA all led to cancellations of advertising. So did an editorial that took an almost neutral, rather than pro-Israel stance on the Arab-Israeli war. "You have madness in publishing now," says Hinckle. "There is no relationship between the publisher and the reader. It's all between the publisher and the advertising agencies. The readers are there as consumer figures to be marketed and put together for the ad agencies. The readers don't even get to say if they want a magazine to go out of business."

\* He was blinded in his left eye in an automobile accident as a child.